



## State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Subject: **Changes with Instructor Certification Process – New Instructors**

The Department is implementing two changes in the certification process of new safety instructors (Instructor Candidates). The changes are designed to promote the professionalism of our instructors and provide another level of safety for our students. We know the thought of “change” impacts everyone in a different way. As you evaluate the outlined changes keep in mind they’re designed to improve the overall Recreational Safety Program and please contact your Recreational Safety Warden with any questions or comments.

1. **Apprentice Instructor Exam.** As part of the certification process all Apprentice Instructors will now need to complete and submit an Apprentice Instructor Exam prior to certification. The exam is not designed to be tricky and does not require studying prior to taking the exam. In fact it’s open book, with no time limit and we encourage it to be taken with a sponsoring instructor.

The exam follows the Recreation Safety Instructor Procedures Manual, working through the manual in a page by page process from beginning to end. To cover all the important aspects of the manual the exam is 100 questions of either true/false and fill in the blank. A majority of the questions are taken word for word from the manual. By taking time and following the manual, there should be no problem completing the exam at the 90% or higher standard.

What are the benefits of this change?

- Prior to getting certified, Instructor Candidates will know the expectations.
- Instructors will be familiar with the Recreational Safety Instructor Procedures Manual, making it easier of all instructors, especially lead instructors.
- Instructors will learn teaching tips, methods and learning styles

The Apprentice Exam and Recreational Safety Instructor Procedures Manual are located on our Volunteer Instructors Corner web site at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/enforcement/instructor.html> or they can be obtained by contacting your Recreational Safety Warden.

2. **Background Checks.** A background check will now be required prior to an Instructor Candidate participating or assisting with a course. Previously, background checks were conducted after an Apprentice Instructor had assisted the Sponsoring Instructor with 2 complete program courses. This change is long overdue. Organizations that conduct activities with children have required these initial background checks of instructors/assistants/chaperones for many years and for obvious reasons. Many of our instructors have suggested this change as an important part of ensuring that Instructor Candidates have a background that is consistent with the Recreational Safety Program goals.

The impact of this procedural change will be timing. Sponsoring Instructors will need to plan ahead and submit the Safety Course Instructor Certification form (#8500-067) to the Recreational Safety Warden early in the process allowing 4 to 5 weeks for the background check to be conducted prior to the apprentice starting with a course.

What are the benefits of this change?

- Apprentice Instructor is aware of the background process from the start
- Sponsoring Instructors aren't spending time and effort on an apprentice who will not get certified in the program.
- Apprentice Instructors who do not pass the background check will not have contact with any students.
- It adds another level of assurance to the public who would demand such a basic protection

All of us in the Recreational Safety Programs appreciate your valuable service to the citizens of Wisconsin and Wisconsin's Recreational Safety Program. The efforts of our volunteer safety instructor core has and will continue to make Wisconsin a safe place to enjoy our outdoor heritage.

Sincerely

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Recreation Education and Enforcement – Section Chief

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Snowmobile and ATV Administrator

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